

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 028836
ORIGIN EB-08

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APPROVED BY EB/TCA:JWBILLER
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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FOR CLAY BLACK

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ETEL, UK

SUBJECT: MARITIME SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS - INMARSAT

REF: LONDON 18029 (NOV. 2, 1977)

EMBASSY REQUESTED TO PASS FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO MR. K. R.
THACKER, BRITISH POST OFFICE:

DEAR MR. THACKER:

I HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF YOUR TELEX DATED JANUARY 20 SENT
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TO ALL INMARSAT PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEMBER STATES AND
OBSERVERS, INVITING THEIR PARTICIPATION AT A CONFERENCE TO
BE HELD IN BOURNEMOUTH, ENGLAND, FROM APRIL 10-14 FOR THE
PURPOSE OF NEGOTIATING AN AGREEMENT TO BE THE BASIS FOR
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GLOBAL COMMERCIAL MARITIME COMMUNI-
CATIONS SATELLITE SYSTEM TO FOLLOW THE EXISTING MARISAT

SYSTEM.

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS FULLY AWARE OF AND HAS INTERPOSED NO OBJECTION TO THE MARISAT JOINT VENTURE'S PARTICIPATION IN THE EXPLORATORY TALKS WHICH HAVE PRECEDED THIS CONFERENCE, AND WE DO NOT NOW OBJECT TO THEIR FURTHER PARTICIPATION, AS PRIVATE BUSINESS ENTITIES, IN

TALKS INTENDED TO CLARIFY THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT MIGHT EXIST FOR A JOINT UNDERTAKING TO PROVIDE FOLLOW-ON SERVICE UPON THE EXPIRY OF THE CURRENT GENERATION OF MARISAT SATELLITES. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL PARTIES UNDERSTAND THE POSITION OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN THIS MATTER.

THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES PROVISION SHOULD BE MADE FOR A MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE CAPABILITY TO PROVIDE CONTINUITY OF MARITIME SATELLITE SERVICE BEYOND THE CURRENT MARISAT SYSTEM. TO THIS END, WE BELIEVE IT IS PRUDENT TO EXPLORE ALL PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVES. WE LOOK UPON THE TALKS AMONG THE MARISAT JOINT VENTURE, INTERIM EUTELSAT, THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY, AND OTHERS, AS POSSIBLY LEADING TO ONE SUCH ALTERNATIVE, AND BELIEVE FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF THE PROPOSED BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT TO BE DESIRABLE.

HOWEVER, WE MUST STRESS WHAT WE UNDERSTAND THE MARISAT UNCLASSIFIED

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JOINT VENTURE PARTNERS HAVE STATED AT THEIR SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH THE OTHER PARTIES TO THESE DISCUSSIONS, I.E., THAT ANY BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT THEY MIGHT MUTUALLY AGREE UPON WOULD, INsofar AS UNITED STATES PARTICIPATION WAS INVOLVED, NECESSARILY BE SUBJECT TO U.S. GOVERNMENT APPROVAL. CONSIDERATIONS RELATIVE TO U.S. POLICY DETERMINATIONS REGARDING MARITIME SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE ARE CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE DETERMINATION OF AN ENTITY TO REPRESENT

U.S. INTERESTS IN ANY FUTURE MARITIME SATELLITE SYSTEM.

IN CONCLUSION, I WISH TO REITERATE OUR VIEW THAT EXAMINATION OF VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES SHOULD PROCEED. HOWEVER, THE PARTIES TO THE DISCUSSIONS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS NOT ITSELF PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE A DEFINITIVE ARRANGEMENT, NOR IS IT PREPARED TO AUTHORIZE ANY PARTICULAR ENTITY TO DO SO, AT THIS TIME. FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE MARISAT JOINT VENTURE SHOULD THEREFORE BE UNDERSTOOD TO BE OF A PURELY PRIVATE NATURE, HAVING NO OFFICIAL STATUS INsofar AS THE U.S. IS

CONCERNED, AND NO SPECIFIC GOVERNMENTAL DETERMINATION
SHOULD BE INFERRED. I HOPE THESE VIEWS WILL BE HELPFUL
IN CLARIFYING OUR POSITION, AND PLACING IN PERSPECTIVE
THE PARTICIPATION OF THE MARISAT JOINT VENTURE IN
FURTHER DISCUSSIONS.

SINCERELY YOURS,

JOEL W. BILLER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS. VANCE

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

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